

**Department of State****Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity**

**(NOFO):** FY 2022 Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program Placement Components

**Announcement Type:** New Cooperative Agreement

**Funding Opportunity Number:** SFOP0008757

**Assistance Listing (formerly CFDA) Number:** 19.415

**Key Date/Application Deadline:** May 20, 2022

**Executive Summary**

The Office of Citizen Exchanges of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) announces an open competition for cooperative agreements for the FY 2022 Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program Placement Components. The YES program advances the U.S. foreign policy goals of engaging youth populations and building civil society by providing physical, academic-year exchanges, and building lasting ties between foreign high school students and the communities that host them. The YES program will provide scholarships for international high school students to live in the United States for an academic year (a semester for Malaysian participants) and attend a U.S. high school. In turn, these students will expose U.S. citizens to the culture and traditions of people in their home countries.

U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) may submit proposals to identify host schools; vet, select, and monitor host families; and place and monitor a portion of the students participating in the YES program during the 2023-24 academic year. The Bureau anticipates that the cooperative agreements will begin on approximately September 1, 2022, and end on approximately September 30, 2026, subject to the availability of funds and pending successful performance.

It is the Bureau's intent to award approximately 10 to 12 cooperative agreements with a duration of one base year (covering academic year 2023-24) plus two non-competitive continuation (NCC) years (covering academic years 2024-25 and 2025-26) for an estimated total amount of \$27,589,800. Please see section B. Federal Award Information, below for additional details.

The YES Placement Component, which is the subject of this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) announcement, is one of two major components of the YES program. The other major component, the Overseas Components cooperative agreement, is awarded separately. The recipient of the Overseas Components award will be responsible for recruitment and selection of students; organization and distribution of student assignments and application packets to Placement Components award recipients, hereinafter referred to as Placement Organizations (POs); preparation of cross-cultural materials; pre-departure orientation and arrival orientations; international travel arrangements from home to host community and return; facilitation of ongoing communication between the participants' natural parents and the POs; support of students with disabilities; maintenance of a student database; and ongoing follow-up with alumni after their return home. Many key activities of the POs chosen through this solicitation will be conducted in direct coordination with the FY 2022 Overseas Components award recipient. It is imperative for the success of the YES program

that POs work efficiently and openly with the U.S. Department of State and the Overseas Components award recipient for the duration of the award. The FY 2022 Overseas Components award recipient is responsible for the coordination of many overarching activities involved in the YES program implementation. Each PO is provided with the *YES Operational Guidelines*, a manual that gives instructions for these overlapping roles that POs must follow for the smooth coordination of tasks.

### **A. Program Description**

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is “to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries...; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations...and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world.” The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation. Some funding for this program may be provided from Economic Support Fund (ESF) transfers. ECA reserves the right to modify the composition of the final awards and their funding level.

***Purpose:*** The YES program annually provides approximately 800 high school students (aged 15 to 18.5 at the start of the program) from countries with significant Muslim populations an opportunity to live with an American family, attend high school, engage in community service, and participate in school and community activities. Funding through the Placement Components awards is also intended to allow Placement Organizations to sponsor local activities that will enhance students’ understanding of American style democracy and civil society. YES students are recruited from Albania, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Egypt, Gaza, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Israel (Arab Communities), Jordan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kuwait, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Malaysia, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Pakistan, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Suriname, Tanzania, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, and the West Bank. To date, over 13,800 students have participated in the YES program. More information about the YES program can be found at <https://yesprograms.org>.

The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposed project configurations, budgets, and participant numbers in accordance with the program’s needs and availability of funds. In addition, the Bureau reserves the right to adjust and/or add additional countries should conditions change in a partner country and/or if other countries are identified as viable alternatives and/or Department priorities. The number of students who will participate in a given year is subject to the availability of funding in the FY 2022 base year (academic year 2023-2024) and in the subsequent two Non-Competitive Continuation (NCC) years of FY 2023 (academic year 2024-2025) and FY 2024 (academic year 2025-2026).

***YES Inbound Program Goals:*** The overall goals of the YES program are as follows:

- Promote better understanding by youth from the United States and participating countries about host society, people, institutions, values, and culture;
- Foster lasting personal and professional ties;
- Advance mutual understanding, respect for diversity, leadership skills, and understanding of civil society during the exchange experience and beyond; and
- Enhance understanding of other countries and cultures and increase accurate understanding of American values in communities abroad.

**Outcomes/ Results:** The YES inbound program is intended to engage youth and foster relationships between the people of foreign countries and the United States by enabling students to:

- gain an understanding of American culture, diversity, and respect for others with differing views and beliefs;
- educate Americans about their home countries and cultures;
- interact with Americans and generate enduring ties;
- explore and acquire an understanding of the key elements of U.S. civil society, including concepts such as volunteerism, the idea that American citizens can and do act at the grassroots level to deal with societal problems, and an awareness of and respect for the rule of law; and
- share and apply experiences and knowledge in their home communities as YES alumni, initiating activities that focus on development and community service.

Organizations applying for this cooperative agreement must be able to dedicate to this program key staff who possess a thorough understanding of the secondary school student Exchange Visitor (J-1 Visa) Program regulations (see <https://j1visa.state.gov/sponsors/current/regulations-compliance/>).

Your proposal must include a plan to place and monitor a minimum of 30 YES students. There is no maximum number of students that may be placed by one organization, and the applicant organization may work with subaward recipients. A subaward recipient may place fewer than 30 students, as long as the primary award recipient will itself place at least 30 students. Your proposal must explain how you will provide mentoring, training, oversight, and additional monitoring of students placed by your subaward recipients. Placements may be in any region of the United States. Strong preference will be given to organizations that choose to place participants in clusters of at least three students (these students should be from different countries, when possible) in a particular local coordinator's area of responsibility under review criterion, "Program Planning/Ability to Achieve Program Objectives," as listed in section E of this document. FY 2022 YES Placement Components award recipients will accept and place students assigned by the FY 2022 YES Overseas Components award recipient. Your organization will be assigned students who will come from any of the countries listed above or others as determined by ECA. Approval of final allocations to all POs will be made by ECA.

Administration of the program must be in compliance with federal, state, and local tax reporting and withholding regulations as applicable. Recipient organizations must demonstrate regulation adherence in the proposal narrative and budget.

***YES Program Participants:*** YES participants are 15 to 18.5 years old at the start of their program. They travel to the United States on J-1 Visas, issued by the U.S. Department of State. Under the terms of their visas, they must return to their home countries following the conclusion of their exchange program in the United States. POs are expected to assist the State Department in enforcing this regulation.

YES participants are selected for the program on the basis of academic merit and personal qualities. Applicants undergo a series of examinations and an interview to evaluate their ability to adjust to new cultures and their English language proficiency. The Department of State seeks to include students of diverse national and ethnic backgrounds and students with disabilities. Although most applicants have good academic preparation and English comprehension, speaking, and writing skills, a small number of program participants will need English language tutoring or other academic tutoring after arriving in their host communities. Organizations are encouraged to propose resources that could meet this need. Finalists also undergo medical screening.

FY 2022 base year participants will begin to arrive in Washington, DC, for a supplementary orientation and then in their host communities in early August 2023. Students with disabilities will be among the first to arrive. Malaysian participants will arrive in January 2024. The Malaysians are the only group that participates for a single semester. For budgetary purposes, the applicant may expect that one in every 15-20 students will be a semester student. The students will remain for 10 to 11 months (the Malaysians, five months) until their departure in June 2024.

#### **Approximate Timeline:**

- September 2022: Cooperative Agreements Awarded
- January-March 2023: Distribution of student applications by FY 2022 YES Overseas Components award recipient and recruitment of host schools and families
- May-August 2023: Pre-departure orientations conducted by FY 2022 Overseas Components recipient and sub-recipients
- Early to late August 2023: Participants arrive in Washington, DC, in groups for DC Orientation conducted by the Overseas Components award recipient and subaward recipients
- Late August 2023: All final placement information (host family names and addresses, confirmed school enrollments) to be submitted to the U.S. Department of State
- August-September 2023: Arrival Orientations for students in host communities
- September 2023: First NCC exercised, pending successful performance and the availability of FY 2023 funds. (First NCC would follow similar timeline to FY 2022 base year, with student applications distributed January-March 2024 for the academic year

2024-2025 cohort and all other events taking place as described here for the 2023-2024 cohort.)

- January-February 2024: Mid-Year Orientations for students
- Spring 2024: Civic Education Workshop for selected YES students (\*For your information only. Do not offer a plan or budget for this component in your proposal as it is covered in the FY 2022 YES Overseas Components award.)
- May 2024: Re-entry Orientations
- June 2024: Departure of students to Washington, DC, for end-of-stay events, followed by return to home countries
- September 2024: Second NCC exercised, pending successful performance and the availability of FY 2024 funds. (Second NCC would follow similar timeline to FY 2022 base year and FY 2023 first NCC, with student applications distributed January-March 2025 for the academic year 2025-2026 cohort and all other events taking place as described here for the 2023-2024 cohort.)
- September 30, 2026: Cooperative Agreements' end date

## **A1. Recipient Responsibilities**

The responsibilities of the recipient organization are as follows:

### **1. Participant Materials**

Prepare student materials, specific to your organization, that will be distributed by the Overseas Components recipient during the Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO). Materials must be received by the FY 2022 Overseas Components award recipient by May 1, 2023, for distribution at PDO. All required materials are listed in 22 CFR 62. All materials must identify students as YES students and must include information on the U.S. Department of State as the program sponsor.

### **2. Marketing**

- Develop organization-specific promotional and marketing materials. All official documents and marketing materials must clearly identify YES as a U.S. Department of State program. Unless a waiver is granted, documents must include the American flag and the State Department seal. The Bureau will retain copyright use of and may distribute materials related to this program. Please see <https://eca.state.gov/comms-guidance-1> for the most current guidance.
- Additional YES marketing materials may be obtained from the Overseas Components recipient.

### **3. Host Families**

- Recruit, screen, select, and secure host families prior to the students' departures from their home countries. POs' practices and procedures for recruiting, screening, and selecting host families and placing YES participants with host families must meet the

Exchange Visitor Program regulations for the secondary school student category (22 CFR 62.25).

- Proposals that demonstrate compliance with these regulations and detail the organization's oversight over local coordinators will be deemed more competitive under the Participant Monitoring review criterion. Please contact the YES Program Office if you have any questions regarding how the regulations apply to YES participants.

#### **4. Host Schools**

- Secure enrollment in accredited secondary educational institutions for the students prior to their departures from their home countries. POs' practices and procedures for placing YES participants in secondary schools must meet the Exchange Visitor Program regulations for the secondary school student category (22 CFR 62.25).
- Encourage school administrators to utilize students as resources in the classroom and community. They should discuss options for extracurricular activities that correlate with Program goals (e.g., Student Council, Junior Achievement, Future Business Leaders of America, volunteer opportunities).
- Due to cultural sensitivities, POs must obtain ECA concurrence before placing students in religious, private, and non-traditional public schools. For schools with a religious affiliation, student and natural parent approval is also required. Home schooling and long-term virtual schooling are not options; a school may, however, temporarily move to a virtual format to safeguard public health during the period the student is enrolled.

#### **5. Clustering**

- ECA encourages placements in all 50 states and the District of Columbia in a wide range of rural, urban, and suburban settings. POs that choose to cluster all or most of their students will be deemed more competitive under the Program Planning/Ability to Achieve Program Objectives review criterion. A cluster is defined as a minimum of three ECA-funded scholarship students who live within reasonable proximity and can be brought together for activities that address common ECA-funded program themes (e.g., orientations and program enhancement activities). ECA-funded scholarship students are identified as those participating in YES, the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX), or the Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) program.
- Applicants are expected to cluster a minimum of 60% of their placements. Multiple local coordinators may work together to form a cluster. Applicants must describe how local staff and volunteers will provide non-clustered exchange students the benefits of orientations and enhancement activities.

#### **6. English and Academic Tutoring**

POs should anticipate that a small percentage of students may require English or other academic tutoring to support them in their educational requirements. You are not expected to organize a formal training program. However, you should offer cost-effective plans for how you would address this need and budget for it. Your proposal should describe your strengths

in placing and supporting students who need tutoring. (See allowable costs under section D.14.a.)

## 7. Students with Disabilities

The YES program provides special assistance to approximately 10 to 20 students (or potentially more) with disabilities each year. Students with disabilities go through the same selection process as other YES students; however, POs should understand that they may not have been raised in an inclusive community or attended a mainstream school. After attending a preparatory workshop managed by the Overseas Components recipient in August, YES students with disabilities will arrive in their permanent host communities. Your proposal must include a plan for placing, monitoring, and supporting students with disabilities, helping them become acclimated to their community, and finding appropriate resources and accommodations for them, as needed and as required by law. Separate funding is provided through the FY 2022 YES Overseas Components to help support students with disabilities and their POs. POs will coordinate necessary reasonable accommodation expenses with the FY 2022 Overseas Components award recipient. It is anticipated that each PO will be assigned at least one student with a disability.

For your information, the responsibilities of the FY 2022 Overseas Components award recipient regarding participants with disabilities include the following:

- Contacting disability organizations for hosting outreach.
- Conducting a 3-to-4-day preparatory workshop for students immediately upon their arrival to educate students on the legal rights of and resources available for people with disabilities in the United States. The FY 2022 Overseas Components award recipient will be responsible for travel to and from the workshop.
- Thoroughly assessing each student's condition and specific needs during the Preparatory Workshop and providing an assessment report to the appropriate PO.
- Providing POs with support and resources throughout the year.
- Providing funding for reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities.

## 8. Trainings/Orientations

Plan and conduct the following trainings and orientations. Proposals should include (as an appendix) sample outlines with relevant topics to be covered in these trainings and orientations.

***YES-specific Staff/Volunteer Training and Orientation:*** Conduct YES-specific training for all your employees, including all local coordinators, volunteers, and third parties acting on your behalf who are involved in the FY 2022 Placement Component awards. This training should be designed to provide the methods and tools necessary for monitoring and counseling YES students, their host families, and school personnel, with sensitivity to cross-cultural issues specific to this exchange population. The training must ensure understanding of the goals, expectations, and requirements of the YES program as explained in this NOFO, as well as all J-1 Visa requirements. J-1 Visa regulations require that all local coordinators



be trained and knowledgeable regarding the J-1 Visa requirements. Your proposal must describe a training and knowledge-review plan to meet this obligation. If you receive an award, your semi-annual performance reports (see item 18 below) must detail and confirm the implementation of your training and knowledge-review plan. Your local coordinator training data will be included in ECA's required annual compliance reporting to the Office of Private Sector Programs.

***Host Family Orientation:*** Prior to the students' arrival, conduct an in-person YES-specific orientation for all screened and selected host families and provide them with the information and reference materials necessary to host and support a YES student. (Note: Previous interviews during the screening and selection process do not constitute this YES-specific orientation.) The YES Program Office recommends that orientations for families hosting YES students not include other non-YES host families to ensure that adequate attention is given to YES program-related and cross-cultural issues.

***Arrival Orientation for Participants:*** Your practices and procedures for the YES student arrival orientation must meet the general J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program regulations and the Secondary School Student category-specific orientation requirements. Orientations should take place within one month of the students' arrival and address the PO's policies, procedures, and rules, as well as the PO's procedures for communicating with students and for monitoring and supporting their exchange, with sensitivity to cultural issues specific to this exchange population. The orientations must ensure understanding of the goals, expectations, and requirements of the YES program as explained in this NOFO.

***Mid-Year Orientation:*** Arrange a mid-year orientation to meet with all YES participants approximately halfway through their exchange programs, preferably in January. The purpose of this meeting is to assess their progress in achieving program and personal goals and to provide the necessary assistance to enable them to meet these goals.

***Re-entry Training:*** Prepare students to bring closure to their American exchange experiences and prepare them for re-entry to their home countries. Ensure students receive relevant information about YES alumni opportunities in their respective countries and discuss individual plans for possible alumni projects. Note: Alumni activities are coordinated in the students' countries by the Overseas Components award recipient.

## 9. Participant Monitoring and Support

ECA employs a team of Participant Monitoring Specialists who oversee the health and safety of all YES students during their time on program in the United States, and placement organizations will need to work closely with ECA's monitors on escalated cases, which must be documented in a timely way. Your practices and procedures for monitoring YES participants must meet the Exchange Visitor Program regulations for the secondary school student category, i.e., 22 CFR 62.25. ECA's Youth Programs Division in the Office of Citizen Exchanges provides the following further guidance that POs must follow:



### ***Monitoring Guidance***

- **Local Coordinators:** A local coordinator is essential to the day-to-day support of each YES student and is defined as a representative of the PO who lives in the host community, identifies and vets potential host families, processes the enrollment of the student in the host school, and provides guidance and support for the student and host family during the program year, among other duties listed in the J-1 Visa regulations. The PO will ensure that each YES student has access to a local coordinator within 120 miles of their host family home, per J-1 Visa regulations. Local coordinators must report all placement changes and student on-program support concerns to the PO in a timely manner.
- **Student Progress:** Local coordinators will monitor students' progress in academics, social adjustment, and activities such as community service, exemplary achievements, and other program-related endeavors and track their progress in monthly contact reports.
- **Reporting Systems:** POs will use reporting systems to distribute and collect monthly updates, reports, and other communications that students will fill out and submit themselves. Your proposal should provide details on this system. Plans that describe ways to attain 100% student participation will be deemed more competitive under the Participant Monitoring review criterion. The purpose of these student monthly updates is to allow YES students to report issues and to allow the POs to track these issues effectively. POs must promptly notify ECA and the FY 2022 Overseas Components award recipient about problems, inconsistencies, or concerns that are identified from these updates.
- **Student Support:** Local coordinators will identify when students may need additional support from their natural parents, peers, or other PO staff; arrange counseling for participants if needed; document the circumstances; and notify the PO which will, when necessary, notify the FY 2022 Overseas Components award recipient to gain natural parent perspective or concurrence. POs also will notify ECA when necessary.
- **Early Returns:** If a situation leads to an early return request, the PO should provide ECA with consistent and thorough documentation that ensures that the involved students, host families, and natural families are aware of the situation and have been consulted on its resolution. POs will promptly prepare a clear and concise Incident Report of the circumstances, detailing actions taken and communication between parties. The report will be shared with the FY 2022 Overseas Components award recipient and ECA. Only ECA's Youth Programs Division can make the decision to terminate and repatriate a student; under no circumstances will POs, or anyone acting on their behalf, inform YES participants or imply to them that their programs will terminate or that they will be repatriated without specific direction from the ECA's Youth Programs Division.

### ***Site Visits***

- Full-time permanent employees or official designees of the PO's headquarters office must conduct site visits to 20% of the PO's YES students in their host family/community environments. The visits should cover a combination of clustered and non-clustered students.

- Submit site visit plans to ECA through the on-program support email address provided to award recipients. Site visit plans for October-December should be submitted by September 30, 2023. Site visit plans for January-June should be submitted by December 15, 2023.
- In addition to PO site visits, the ECA Participant Monitoring Team will conduct site visits to students in their host schools and host communities. POs must be prepared to assist the ECA Participant Monitoring Team in the scheduling of ECA monitoring visits throughout the program year.

### ***Communication Guidance***

- POs, whether or not they are designated as sponsors by the U.S. Department of State, must report to ECA any matters that are required to be reported by a sponsor pursuant to the above regulations.
- Provide ECA's Participant Monitoring Team with reports of all situations that affect the health, safety, or well-being of YES participants. ECA's Youth Programs Division will in turn be responsible for reporting to the Office of Private Sector Exchange.
- Enter complete, accurate, and up-to-date placement information into the YES web-based database, including host family and local coordinator changes that occur during the year within 48 hours of the time that the change took place.
- In a timely fashion, distribute to all YES students information that ECA provides regarding Department of State-initiated YES program activities. Such activities include International Education Week, Civic Education Workshop, Global Youth Service Day, and ad-hoc program-related activities that may arise during the year (e.g., online chats, meetings, briefings).
- Inform ECA of any publicity featuring YES students or the YES program, particularly any engagements with government officials or articles in the media. When the media interact with YES students, POs should identify YES as a U.S. Department of State program.

## **10. Enhancements**

Conduct cultural enhancement and leadership development programs throughout the exchange. (Also see allowable costs under Section D.14.a.) Funding for enhancement activities should be disbursed in small increments throughout the year to encourage a variety of activities. Applicants should include \$400 per student in their budgets to cover the cost of these activities. Enhancement funds may not be spent on large, packaged sightseeing trips. All enhancement activities should include debrief sessions so participants can discuss and interpret what they have experienced.

### ***Cultural Enhancement Activities***

Conduct cultural enhancement activities to increase the participants' understanding of American culture, values, and history. These activities should expose students to key elements of American civil society and foster dialogue and enduring ties between the students and their host communities.

Examples of cultural enhancement activities include briefings on local or state government and the judicial system; programs on community issues and concerns (e.g., diversity, equity, and inclusion; environmental protection; public health; and entrepreneurship) that expose participants to and increase their understanding of American society.

### ***Leadership Development Programs***

You are encouraged to earmark a portion of the \$400 per student enhancement activities fund for specialized training for the development of leadership skills such as public speaking, team building, critical thinking, media literacy, and goal setting so that the students are prepared to apply these skills both while on program and once they return to their home countries.

Proposed training should explore issues that foster civic responsibility, tolerance, public service, conflict resolution, and project management. You are encouraged to interact with established local youth-oriented groups and to use free or low-cost resources, and/or provide scholarships through cost-share to enable YES students to participate in local and national leadership trainings. This section of the application will be assessed under the Program Planning/Ability to Achieve Program Objectives review criterion.

## **11. Community Service Activities**

All YES students are required to perform a minimum of 30 hours of community service activities during their program year, although POs may set a higher minimum number for their YES students. POs are expected to assist students in identifying opportunities for community service and provide them and their host families with clear guidelines that reflect standards, requirements, and expectations, including but not limited to the following:

- Minimum number of hours and type (e.g., volunteer work or other tasks) of required community service;
- Method by which POs will monitor community service; and
- Consequences of failing to meet this obligation.

## **12. Health Benefits Coverage**

The Bureau offers the Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) benefits plan for students participating in the program. Detailed information on ASPE can be found at: <https://www.sevencorners.com/about/gov/usdos>. There is no cost to a PO that opts to use the ASPE plan. POs wishing to use a different plan must demonstrate that such alternate plan provides comparable or more comprehensive coverage. Coverage must begin when students depart their home countries and not conclude until they return home. Please keep in mind that the students with disabilities who participate in the Disability Components Preparatory Workshop must be covered by the PO's health benefits policy, or the ASPE benefits plan, while they are participating in the workshop. If you choose not to use ASPE, your proposal must include a copy of your chosen health benefits policy and must include the cost of the policy in the proposed budget. The benefits plan you propose to use must meet the requirements of 22 CFR 62.14. Students and natural families must be informed in

writing of any limitations of coverage noted in the policies.

### **13. Student Financial and Gift Incentives**

As recipients of a full scholarship, and with continuing support and opportunities available to them when they become alumni, YES students accept considerable responsibilities in return. Participation in program activities, including orientations, cluster meetings and events, community service, and presentations during International Education Week are requirements. Therefore, POs should not request funds to give students monetary or other material incentives to participate in program-related activities.

### **14. ECA Academic Year Programs Annual Meeting**

Send one or two representatives to participate in the annual ECA academic year programs meeting, to be held for two days in Washington, DC in early 2023.

### **15. Program Impact Highlights**

Regularly provide timely reports of students' significant accomplishments and host community impact throughout the exchange.

### **16. Student Likeness (Photos and Video) Usage**

Confirm with the FY 2022 Overseas Components award recipient that a waiver, signed by the student and the student's natural family, to have photographic or video images of the student taken, reproduced, and published, is on record before allowing such activity.

### **17. Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Survey students to assess program impact, track host families and other key participants, and develop a monitoring plan to measure the organization's success in achieving the YES program outcomes.
- Your monitoring activities will be separate from the monitoring and evaluation activities (such as data collection for ECA's MODE framework) conducted by the Overseas Components recipient.
- ECA may request assistance in administering additional tools to participants that are separate from your organization's internal monitoring of the program.
- Maintain all data collected, including survey responses and contact information, for a minimum of three years following completion of each participant's exchange program.

### **18. Performance Reporting**

- Report the organization's successes and challenges in achieving program goals and outcomes through two semi-annual reports and other interim updates, as requested. The YES Program Office will supply semi-annual report guidelines. POs must submit semi-annual performance reports no more than 30 days after the reporting-period end date. These due dates will be listed in the award agreement. As noted in item 9 above, J-1 Visa regulations require that all local coordinators be trained and knowledgeable regarding the J-1 Visa requirements. Your proposal must describe a training and knowledge-review

plan to meet this obligation, and your semi-annual performance reports must detail and confirm the implementation of your training and knowledge-review plan. Please see section F.4., Reporting Requirements, for detailed instructions on how to submit performance and financial reports.

- Provide a final program report no more than 120 days after the expiration or termination of the award.

## **19. Financial Reporting**

Prepare and submit semi-annual and final financial reports.

## **20. Financial Management**

Manage fiscal data and accounting for award funding, as required by federal law, including cost-sharing and any funds provided to approved subaward recipients, if applicable.

## **21. Subaward Recipient Management**

- If applicable, ensure that subaward recipients have received a copy of the NOFO and are versed in all requirements, including OMB Guidance 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, your organization's expectations, and J-1 Visa regulations.
- Monitor and oversee subaward recipients to ensure quality of performance of YES program duties under your organization's award.

## **22. U.S. Department of State Web Resources:**

***Outreach Resources:*** During the cooperative agreement period, the Bureau may develop hosting resources to assist POs with hosting outreach and to promote YES as a U.S. Department of State program. POs are expected to support promotional campaigns by providing information to ECA and updating promotional materials as requested.

***Online Communities:*** All PO staff and volunteers associated with YES are expected to be knowledgeable about the U.S. Department of State's resources such as, but not limited to, [www.exchanges.state.gov](http://www.exchanges.state.gov) and [www.alumni.state.gov](http://www.alumni.state.gov), and to register as members or guest members of the websites, as applicable. Staff and coordinator training, as well as orientations for students and host families, should include presentations and demonstrations on these resources.

U.S. Department of State resource sites must be promoted effectively to participants, and you should prepare participants to become active members at the alumni site. While POs may provide their own resources and online opportunities, these additional online resources may not replace involvement with U.S. Department of State online communities for exchange students and alumni.

## **23. Website Management**

The PO's YES website page must be easily accessible from your organization's homepage and be kept up to date. Please use the U.S. Department of State seal and the American flag

on the YES webpage. For online student profiles, your website must be secure, so only those who have been fully vetted will be able to see a photo or view personally identifiable information. These profiles, both online and printed materials, should identify students as YES to differentiate them from your organization's private students.

## **A2. Substantial Involvement**

In a cooperative agreement, the Department is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring, as follows:

1. Providing advice and assistance in the execution of all program components.
2. Serving as liaison between the award recipients and personnel within the U.S. Department of State, including ECA, the regional bureaus, and overseas posts.
3. Monitoring and evaluating the program and its participants through email and phone communication, and site visits and providing guidance and decisions on issues regarding student health, safety, and welfare on program. As J-1 Visa sponsor, submitting all reports required by J-1 Visa regulations to ECA's Office of Private Sector Programs.
4. Hosting an annual meeting for all award recipients to provide program guidance and gather feedback.
5. Approving program promotional materials and website information.
6. Representing the U.S. government as the program sponsor at exchange events, program events, and orientations, as appropriate.
7. Publicizing program highlights and responding to Congressional and Department requests for information.
8. Performing an annual performance evaluation/review. Satisfactory performance is a condition of continued administration of the program and execution of NCCs.

## **A3. Non-Competitive Continuations**

Proposal narratives should include a commitment to implement the program for the base year, plus two additional non-competitive continuations, pending successful performance and the availability of funds. The narrative should focus on details specific to the implementation of the base year program, with the understanding that the program design, duration, and participant numbers would be similar when/if the subsequent two non-competitive continuations are exercised. ECA will perform an annual performance evaluation/review to determine if a non-competitive continuation will be exercised. Satisfactory performance and the availability of funds is a condition of continued administration of the program and execution of all non-competitive continuations.

## **B. Federal Award Information**

**Type of Award:** Cooperative Agreement. ECA's level of involvement in this program is listed under A. Program Description above.

**Fiscal Year Funds:** FY 2022 – base year \$9,196,600, pending availability of funds; FY 2023 – non-competitive continuation year-one \$9,196,600, pending successful performance and the availability of funds; FY 2024 – non-competitive continuation year-two \$9,196,600, pending successful performance and the availability of funds.



**Approximate Total Funding:** \$27,589,800. This figure represents base year plus two Non-Competitive Continuation years, pending successful performance and the availability of funds.

**Approximate Number of Awards:** Approximately 10-12 cooperative agreements

**Approximate Average Award:** \$240,000 to \$360,000 to place 30 students; \$2,400,000 to \$3,600,000 to place 300 students. Funding level is dependent on the number of proposed students, the monitoring plan, the quality of support, and the volume of activities, pending the availability of funds.

**Floor of Award Range:** \$130,000. To be eligible, your proposal must include a plan to place and monitor a minimum of 30 students. There is no maximum number of students that may be placed by one organization, and your organization may work with sub-recipients

**Ceiling of Award Range:** \$9,196,600

**Anticipated Award Date:** September 1, 2022, pending the availability of funds.

**Anticipated Project Completion Date:** September 30, 2026. This date reflects the anticipated duration of the award – one base year plus two NCC years.

**Additional Information:** The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Cooperative agreements will be awarded for a period of 22 months (base year) with Non-Competitive Continuations for one additional 14-month period (NCC year one) and one additional 13-month period (NCC year two). ECA will notify the recipient of its intention to exercise or not to exercise a Non-Competitive Continuation at least 90 days in advance of expiration of the current year after an internal evaluation of the recipient's performance. The decision to exercise a Non-Competitive Continuation will depend both on the satisfactory performance of the recipient and the availability of funds.

Some funding for this program may be provided from Economic Support Fund (ESF) transfers. ECA reserves the right to modify the composition of the final awards and their funding level.

### **C. Eligibility Information**

**C.1. Eligible applicants:** U.S. public and private academic and cultural institutions, exchange-of-persons, and other not-for-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) may submit applications for this competition. Applicants must have nonprofit status with the IRS at the time of application. Please see the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for additional information.

All applicants must also have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number and be registered in SAM.gov (see additional information about this requirement in D.3. and D.5. below).

**C.2. Other Eligibility Requirements:** The following additional eligibility requirements apply to this NOFO announcement:

- a.) Bureau grant guidelines require that organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to \$130,000 in Bureau funding. ECA anticipates making 10 to 12 cooperative agreement awards in an amount of over \$130,000 to support all costs required to implement this exchange program. Therefore, organizations



with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition.

- b.) All proposals must comply with the requirements stated in the NOFO and the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI); non-compliance will result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process.

In addition, proposals that propose to accept students only from specific YES countries or that propose to place all participants in a single community or school will be declared technically ineligible.

- c.) Only *one* proposal will be considered by ECA from each applicant organization. In cases where more than one submission from an applicant appears in grants.gov, ECA will *only* consider the submission made closest in time to the NOFO deadline; that submission would constitute the one and only proposal ECA would review from that applicant.

**Note:** Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name, and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document.

**C.3. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds:** There is no minimum or maximum percentage of cost sharing required for this competition. However, the Bureau encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs. When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as stipulated in its proposal and later included in an approved agreement. Cost sharing may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. For accountability, you must maintain written records to support all costs which are claimed as your contribution, as well as costs to be paid by the Federal government. Such records are subject to audit. The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's Guidance 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. In the event you do not provide the minimum amount of cost sharing as stipulated in the approved budget, ECA's contribution may be reduced in like proportion.

## **D. Application and Submission Information**

Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, Bureau staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

**D.1. Solicitation Package Location:** The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from the Bureau's website at <https://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding> or from the Grants.gov website at <https://www.grants.gov>.

**D.2. Content and Form of Submission:** Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package, including the Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document, which consists of required application forms and standard guidelines for proposal preparation. The application should be submitted per the instructions under section D.16, “Application Deadline and Method of Submission” below.

**D.3. Unique Entity Identifier Number:** You are required to have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number to apply for a grant or cooperative agreement from the U.S. Government. This number is a nine-digit identification number, which uniquely identifies business entities. Obtaining a UEI number is easy and there is no charge. To obtain a UEI number, access <http://www.dnb.com> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please ensure that your UEI (Data Universal Numbering System or DUNS) number is included in the appropriate box of the SF – 424 which is part of the formal application package. For more detailed instructions for obtaining a UEI (DUNS) number, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-1-obtain-duns-number.html>

**D.4. Required Proposal Elements:** All proposals must contain an executive summary, proposal narrative, budget, and budget narrative. The executive summary should, in one double-spaced page, describe your organization’s vision for the program, requested funding level, number of participants supported, cost-sharing amount, and anticipated program impact. The proposal narrative should, in no more than 20 double-spaced pages, describe your proposed program structure, staffing pattern, project management, geographic scope, participant monitoring plan, host family recruitment plan, program evaluation methodology, planned program activities, and work plan/calendar of activities. In addition, please include staff resumes, sample evaluation instruments, sample training and orientation agendas, and sample resource materials or handbooks (these sample items can be included in an appendix that does not count under the 20-page proposal narrative limit). Please see sections D.14. Budget Format and D.14.a. Allowable costs for the program below, as well as the Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document, for detailed information on the budget format, allowable costs, and the required budget narrative.

**D.5. Required Registration with the System for Award Management (SAM):** All federal award applicants must be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) database in order to submit a proposal in response to an open competition on Grants.gov.

All federal award recipients must maintain a current registration in the SAM database. Recipients must maintain accurate and up-to-date information in [www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov) until all program and financial activity and reporting is completed on any issued award. Recipients must review and update the information at least annually after the initial registration and more frequently if required information changes or another award is granted. There is no cost associated with registering or updating SAM.gov accounts. Failure to register in SAM.gov will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

For more detailed instructions for registering with SAM, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-2-register-with-sam.html>

**D.6. Federal Awardee Performance & Integrity Information System (FAPIIS):** Prior to making a Federal Assistance award over \$250,000, the Federal agency is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in FAPIIS (see 41 U.S.C. 2313) and accessible through SAM.gov. If an Applicant is currently in FAPIIS, they can comment on any information about its organization that a Federal awarding agency previously entered. The Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in FAPIIS, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 CFR §200.205 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

**D.7. Required Registration with SAMS Domestic:** All ECA award recipient organizations and recipient contacts and signatories must be registered with the U.S. Department of State's SAMS Domestic by accessing <https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com> and clicking the "create an account" link. SAMS Domestic is the U.S. Department of State's grants management system and is supported by the Department's Integrated Logistics Management System (ILMS). Recipient organizations and recipient contacts and signatories that have previously used SAMS Domestic as a U.S. Department of State award recipient do not need to register again. If the organization is not able to access the system, please contact the ILMS Help Desk for help in gaining access.

Support for Recipient Organizations and recipient contacts and signatories is available 24 hours, 7 days a week (except federal holidays), and can be reached at 1-888-313-ILMS (4567) or through the ILMS Self Service Portal at <https://afsitsm.servicenowservices.com/ilms/>.

In the event the ILMS Help Desk is unable to provide you with assistance in a timely manner, please contact [ECA\\_SAMSDomestic@state.gov](mailto:ECA_SAMSDomestic@state.gov) and copy the program officer associated with the solicitation.

Please take into consideration the following information when preparing your proposal narrative:

**D.8. Adherence To All Regulations Governing the J Visa:** The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs places critically important emphases on the security and proper administration of the Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by award recipients and sponsors to all regulations governing the J visa. Therefore, proposals should demonstrate the applicant's capacity to meet all requirements governing the administration of the Exchange Visitor Programs as set forth in 22 CFR 62, including the oversight of Responsible Officers and Alternate Responsible Officers, screening and selection of program participants, provision of pre-arrival information and orientation to participants, monitoring of participants, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements.

ECA will be responsible for issuing DS-2019 forms to participants in this program.

A copy of the complete regulations governing the administration of Exchange Visitor (J) programs is available at <http://j1visa.state.gov> or from:

Office of Private Sector Exchange Designation  
U.S. Department of State  
SA-5, Floor C2, Rm. C2L13  
2200 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20522

**D.9. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and Freedom and Democracy Guidelines:**

Pursuant to the Bureau’s authorizing legislation, “Diversity” should be interpreted in the broadest sense and encompass differences including race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, geographic origin, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity, equity, and inclusion will enhance the program’s goals and objectives and the participants’ exchange experience. Proposals should demonstrate how the program will further engage diverse and underserved communities. Programs must maintain a non-political character and should be balanced and representative of the diversity of political, social and cultural life in the United States and abroad. Please refer to the “Support of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” review criterion of this document for more information on how this will be reviewed as a part of any application. Please also refer to the “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” section in the “Proposal Submission Instructions” document for specific suggestions on incorporating DEI into the proposal.

Public Law 104-319 provides that “in carrying out programs of educational and cultural exchange in countries whose people do not fully enjoy freedom and democracy,” the Bureau “shall take appropriate steps to provide opportunities for participation in such programs to human rights and democracy leaders of such countries.” Public Law 106-113 requires that the governments of the countries described above do not have inappropriate influence in the selection process. Proposals should reflect advancement of these goals in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

**D.10. Program Monitoring and Evaluation:** A performance monitoring framework is vital to tracking the performance and the direction, pace, and magnitude of change that result from ECA programs. This section pertains to performance monitoring in particular, as this type of monitoring is distinct from grants monitoring or other program monitoring discussed elsewhere in this solicitation. Performance monitoring is designed to assess program impact against established goals and objectives across the Bureau and as established for each award.

In establishing strong performance management practices, ECA is concerned with collecting indicator data on participant outcomes. Because the YES program is implemented by both Placement Organization awardees and an Overseas Components awardee, a determination has

been made that the primary responsibility for collecting indicator data on participant outcomes will lie with the Overseas Components awardee, through the MODE (Monitoring Data for ECA) framework. Therefore, your proposal should confirm that your organization will, if it receives a Placement and Monitoring Component award under this NOFO, support the Bureau's overall performance monitoring efforts established for the YES program, to include updating and providing contact information, as requested by ECA, as well as making YES stakeholders aware they may be requested to take a survey.

1. In addition, proposals must also describe your organization's plan to monitor the project's activities both during and after program implementation, to include tracking participants, and providing information on host families, host schools, materials, and trainings/orientations, and other aspects of the program found in Section A.1.

**D.11. Virtual Exchange Component:** When changing political, health, environmental, or other similar circumstances require a suspension or halt of in-person activities and where ECA determines that a virtual alternative is appropriate and viable, award recipients should demonstrate the ability and capacity to transition from in-person to virtual exchanges. Proposals should demonstrate the organization's capacity to provide innovative options for virtual activities to substitute for in-person engagement for program participants. Organizations should consider how they will implement virtual exchange activities and ensure that participants have internet access as the organization continues to advance foreign policy objectives and achieve lasting benefits for U.S. citizens and international participants.

In addition to planning for virtual exchange activities if in-person programming is prohibited, ECA welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage virtual programming technologies during or in addition to in-person programming. ECA encourages organizations submitting proposals in response to this solicitation to suggest one or more virtual exchange components to complement the in-person exchange. The virtual exchange component(s) could come before, during and/or after the physical exchange. The objective for the virtual exchange component(s) is to augment the impact of the in-person exchange described in this solicitation. ECA encourages organizations to propose virtual exchange ideas that take advantage of ECA's existing web and social networking platforms. Virtual exchange components would be coordinated with and approved by the ECA program office and U.S. missions abroad on a project-by-project basis.

**D.12. Communications Guidance for ECA Recipients:** All ECA Recipients must adhere to the requirements in [ECA's Communications Guidance](#) on the creation of program branding and attribution, websites, social media, and press.

**D.13. Celebration of America's Semiquincentennial:** ECA is excited to play a key role in making the Semiquincentennial – commonly known as “America250” – a truly global celebration. As the period of performance for this award is scheduled to cover part or all of calendar year (CY) 2026, the applicant may wish to consider ways the program can celebrate America250. Any America250 focused activities or plans will be subject to ECA approval and

direction, and changes may be requested by ECA. Use of any ECA-provided America250 brand elements will be subject to advance ECA approval and require adherence to Department of State and ECA guidelines for such branding.

**D.14. Budget Format:** Applicants must submit SF-424A – “Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs” along with a comprehensive budget for the entire program. There must be a summary budget, a detailed budget, and a budget narrative. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification. The detailed budget must use the Standard Budget Categories specified in Part III.B of the PSI.

**D.14.a. Allowable costs for the program include the following:**

1. National and regional coordinator trainings
2. Orientations (post-arrival, mid-program, re-entry) for students and host families
3. Stipends and honoraria for non-salaried staff and volunteers
4. Host family screening (criminal background checks, interviews, home visits)
5. Student and host family monitoring (counseling, troubleshooting, moving students as needed)
6. Program materials (including description of how they will be used)
7. Mandatory school fees (including books, activity fees, or registration costs; in exceptional instances only, tuition may be an allowable cost)
8. Insurance costs, if not using the Bureau’s ASPE benefits plan
9. Salaries and benefits, domestic travel, communications, equipment, and supplies

Please refer to the Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

Your proposal budget should also include these **required** costs:

1. \$200 fixed-rate monthly allowance for each student for 11 months (or 6 months for semester students)
2. \$300 average per student incidentals allowance to be spent by host family for school-related expenses (e.g., yearbook, locker fees, gym clothing) for which receipts must be provided
3. \$100 average per student emergency expense fund to be retained by Placement Organization for small emergency expenses (e.g., eyeglasses, minor dental problems)
4. \$400 average per student enhancement activities fund (all field trips, cultural enhancement and leadership development activities, community service projects, etc. must be included in this amount; additional funding requests will not be accepted)
5. Support and monitoring of local staff, including support for home/community visits to 20% of students
6. Travel costs for at least one person (and not more than two) from each organization, including any sub-award recipients, to attend the in-person, two-day ECA Youth Programs Division annual meeting in Washington, DC, every year.



**D.14. Key Personnel:** ECA recommends that the applicant identify intended key personnel positions via an asterisk (\*) or other marking in the proposal budget, budget narrative, or a separate appendix. If not provided in the application, recipients must submit the names, titles, and brief biographical sketches of key personnel to the Grants Officer and GOR within 30 days of an award being issued. Additional information regarding key personnel requirements can be found in the State Department's Standard Terms and Conditions, VI. Recipient Responsibility and Compliance with Federal Requirements (link to: <https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/>).

**D.15. Non-Competitive Continuations:** Pending successful performance and the availability of funds this award will utilize Non-Competitive Continuations as discussed above.

**D.15.a. For competitions that will exercise a Non-Competitive Continuation applicants must submit:**

- The SF-424A which must include the budget request amount for the base-year of the program.
- A detailed proposal narrative and budget for the base year of funding. (Please refer to the Proposal Submission Instruction Document (PSI) for general budget guidance.) The narrative should also include a brief commitment to implement the program for the base year, plus two additional non-competitive continuation years, pending successful program performance and the availability of funds.
- An abbreviated/estimated summary budget presenting the total projected costs for the anticipated total duration of programming (base year, plus two non-competitive continuation years).

**D.15.b. To exercise the Non-Competitive Continuation mechanism the recipient will be required to submit:**

- Performance and financial reports on time.
- A request in writing to ECA at least 30 days in receipt of the NCC invitation.
- A summary budget that projects expenses through the end of the current year.
- A detailed budget outlining expenses for the requested non-competitive continuation year.
- A brief narrative to support the continuation of the award.

**D.15.c. For awards using Non-Competitive Continuations, in addition to the Substantial Involvement for the Cooperative Agreement, the ECA Grants Officer and Program Officer will:**

1. Closely monitor the recipient's performance through site visits, desk audits, mandatory performance and financial reports, consultations, and other forms of communication and dialogue before exercising additional non-competitive continuations. (Additional details regarding monitoring and oversight of the program by ECA representatives will be provided at the time the base-year award is made.)



2. Review and evaluate all mandatory program and financial reports.
  - All program and financial reporting requirements must be current and up to date before the Bureau will exercise additional non-competitive continuations.
  - Any/all concerns, issues, or modifications requested by the Grants Officer or Program Officer to the original program design or method of implementation must be responded to in writing.
  - The ECA Grants Officer and Program Officer will review and advise of ECA's approval or disapproval of the response before issuing subsequent non-competitive continuations.
3. Prior Grants Officer approval is required to utilize the remainder from an unobligated balance from a prior funding period to the subsequent funding period. If the Grants Officer determines that some or all of the unobligated funds are not necessary to perform the program activity, the Grants Officer may decline the Recipient's request to utilize the remainder from the unobligated balance.

The Grants Officer may, at their discretion, use the unobligated balance to reduce or offset future funding for a subsequent funding period. An unobligated balance at the end of a funding period is not sufficient justification to utilize the remainder of funds. A final determination and approval to utilize the remainder of any funds will be communicated via a cost amendment with adjustment, if any, to new obligation amounts.

The request to utilize the remainder from an unobligated balance must include:

- A brief narrative why funds remain unobligated and how the unobligated funds will be used to complete the previously approved goals and objectives of the program; and,
- A detailed budget that reflects the amount of unobligated funds to date, and anticipated expenditures in the subsequent period of performance for all cost categories under the authorized budget.

#### **D.16. Application Deadline and Method of Submission:**

Application Deadline Date: Friday, May 20, 2022

Method of Submission: Applications may only be submitted electronically through Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov>). Complete solicitation packages are available at Grants.gov in the "Search Grants" portion of the system.

#### **D.17. Grants.gov Registration, Application Submission, and Receipt Procedures**

Eligible organizations should follow the instructions available in the 'Get Started' portion of the site (<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>).

##### **D.17.a. How to Register to Apply through Grants.gov**

Applicants should read instructions carefully and prepare the information requested before beginning the registration process. Reviewing and assembling the required information before beginning the registration process will alleviate last-minute searches for required information.

The registration process can take up to four weeks to complete. Therefore, registration should be done in sufficient time to ensure it does not impact your ability to meet required application submission deadlines. Applicants should check with appropriate staff within their organizations immediately after reviewing this NOFO to confirm or determine their registration status with Grants.gov. Organization applicants can find complete instructions here:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>

#### **D.17.b. How to Submit an Application to ECA via Grants.gov**

For access to complete instruction on how to apply for Notice of Funding Opportunities on Grants.gov, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>

#### **D.17.c. Grants.gov Support and Submission Issues**

Direct all questions regarding Grants.gov registration and submission issues to:

Grants.gov Customer Support

Contact Center Phone: 800-518-4726

Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; closed on federal holidays

Email: [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov)

#### **D.17.d. Timely Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission**

Applicants have until 11:59 p.m., Washington, DC, time of the closing date to ensure that their entire application has been uploaded to the Grants.gov site. There are no exceptions to the above deadline. Applications uploaded to the site after the application deadline date and time will be automatically rejected by the Grants.gov system and will be technically ineligible.

**Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov.**

Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov. An electronic date/time stamp is generated within the system when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) will receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov with the successful transmission of their application. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov Tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When ECA successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov, Grants.gov will provide an electronic acknowledgement of receipt of the application to the email address of the applicant with the AOR role. Again, proof of timely submission shall be the official date and time that Grants.gov receives your application. Please also be mindful of any Grants.gov generated error

messages that may appear during the application process as they may result in some documents not transmitting correctly.

Applicants using slow internet, such as dial-up connections, should be aware that transmission can take some time before Grants.gov receives your application. Grants.gov will provide either an error or a successfully received transmission in the form of an email sent to the applicant with the AOR role. The Grants.gov Support Center reports that some applicants end the transmission because they think that nothing is occurring during the transmission process. Please be patient and give the system time to process the application.

The Grants.gov website includes extensive information on all phases/aspects of the Grants.gov process, including an extensive section on frequently asked questions, located under the “Applicant FAQs” section of the website. ECA strongly recommends that all potential applicants review thoroughly the Grants.gov website, well in advance of submitting a proposal through the Grants.gov system. ECA will not notify you upon receipt of electronic applications.

**PLEASE NOTE:** ECA bears no responsibility for applicant timeliness of submission or data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes for proposals submitted via Grants.gov. Prior to submitting applications through Grants.gov, please ensure you meet all Grants.gov system and software requirements, including Adobe software compatibility. You can verify if your version of Adobe software is compatible with Grants.gov, by visiting <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html>.

**It is the responsibility of all applicants submitting proposals via the Grants.gov web portal to ensure that proposals have been received by Grants.gov in their entirety, and ECA bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes.**

**D.18. Intergovernmental Review of Applications:** Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

## **E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION**

The Bureau will review all proposals for technical eligibility. Proposals will be deemed ineligible if they do not fully adhere to the guidelines stated herein and in the Solicitation Package. All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office, as well as the Public Diplomacy section overseas and State Department regional bureaus, where appropriate. Eligible proposals will be subject to compliance with Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines and forwarded to Bureau grant panels for advisory review. Proposals may also be reviewed by the Office of the Legal Adviser or by other Department elements. All awards will be assessed for risk prior to their issuance. Final funding decisions are at the discretion of the U.S. Department of State’s Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for assistance awards resides with the Bureau's Grants Officer.

### **Review Criteria**

Technically eligible applications will be competitively reviewed according to the criteria stated below. These criteria are not rank ordered and all carry equal weight in the proposal evaluation:

1. **Program Planning/Ability to Achieve Program Objectives:** The program narrative should exhibit originality, substance, and relevance to the Bureau's mission. Reviewers will assess the degree to which proposals engage participants in community activities that involve skills development and leadership training. Proposals should incorporate strategies that creatively utilize local resources to ensure an efficient use of program funds. Strong preference will be given to organizations that choose to place participants in clusters of at least three students (these students should be from different countries, when possible) in a particular local coordinator's area of responsibility. A detailed agenda and work plan should adhere to all guidelines described in the solicitation package.
2. **Multiplier Effect/impact:** Proposed programs should strengthen long-term mutual understanding, including maximum sharing of information and establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages. Reviewers will assess ways in which proposals include innovative ideas to expose U.S. communities to YES-related goals and activities that involve students, host families, and schools. These include media outreach, visits to local and national government representatives, internet-based applications, and other interactions. Reviewers will also evaluate substantive plans to prepare YES students for their role as active, effective YES alumni.
3. **Support of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI):** Proposals should show substantive support of the Bureau's policy on Diversity. Proposals should demonstrate how DEI will be achieved in the different aspects of program administration and of program design, content and implementation, including individual participant recruitment, selection and placement. It is important that proposals have a clearly articulated DEI plan and not simply express general support for the concept of DEI. Proposals should demonstrate how DEI will enhance the program's goals and objectives and the participants' exchange experience. Proposals should demonstrate how the program will further engage diverse and underserved communities.
4. **Placement Organization's Record/Institutional Capacity:** Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the Program's goals and outcomes. Reviewers will assess the applicant and its partners, if any, to determine if they offer adequate resources, expertise, and experience to fulfill program objectives. Partner activities should be clearly defined. Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting and J-1 Visa regulatory requirements for past Bureau grants as determined by Bureau Grant Staff. Past performance of recipients will be considered. For new applicants, proposals should demonstrate capacity to participate in the Program. In addition, organizations designated as Exchange Visitor Program Sponsors must include a discussion of their record of compliance with 22 CFR 62 et seq., including the oversight of their Responsible Officers and Alternate Responsible Officers, monitoring of participants, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements. Proposals that fail to include the above information in

their narrative will be deemed less or not competitive under this review criterion. In addition, ECA will review the record of compliance with 22 CFR 62 et seq. of applicant organizations designated as Exchange Visitor Program Sponsors by ECA's Office of Private Sector Exchange. The applicant organization's record of compliance will be used as one factor in evaluating the record/ability of organizations to carry out successful exchange programs.

5. **Participant Monitoring:** Proposals must include a detailed monitoring plan, which addresses student, local coordinator, and host family monitoring. Given the importance the U.S. Department of State places on this review criterion, you should dedicate a significant percentage of the narrative to explaining how you will achieve the Department's goals in regard to monitoring the health, safety, and welfare of program participants. You may use the appendices to elaborate on monitoring plans and add documentation examples. Plans that describe ways to attain 100% student participation in reporting will be deemed more competitive under this review criterion.
6. **Project Evaluation:** Proposals should include a plan to monitor and evaluate the program's success, both as activities unfold and at the end of the program. Evaluation should include outputs and outcomes, as described above, and should discuss how program success will be determined through stated criteria. Reviewers will assess your plans to monitor student progress and program activities, particularly with regard to intended outcomes indicated in your proposal. Award recipients will be expected to submit semi-annual progress reports and at least two interim reports, which should be included as an integral component of the work plan.
7. **Cost-effectiveness and Cost-Sharing:** Reviewers will analyze the budget for clarity and cost-effectiveness. They will also assess the rationale of the proposed budget and whether the allocation of funds is appropriate to complete the tasks outlined in the Program Narrative. The overhead components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate. Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions. Preference will be given to organizations whose proposals demonstrate a high-quality, cost-effective program.

## **F. Federal Award Administration Information**

**F.1. Award Notices:** Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal Bureau procedures. Successful applicants will receive a Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from the Bureau's Grants Office. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) shall be the only binding authorizing document between the recipient and the U.S. Government. The FAA will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer and transmitted to the recipient's responsible officer as identified in the application.

Unsuccessful applicants will receive notification of the results of the application review from the ECA program office coordinating this competition following the completion of the review process.

**F.2 Administrative and National Policy Requirements:** Terms and Conditions for the Administration of ECA agreements include the following: Office of Management and Budget's Guidance 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Effective December 26, 2014, replacing the previous circulars).

For a copy of the OMB Guidance cited, please contact the U.S. Government Publishing Office or download from the [www.ecfr.gov](http://www.ecfr.gov) website.

Please reference the following websites for additional information:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb>

<https://www.state.gov/m/a/ope/index.htm>

**F.3. Region and Topic Specific requirements:** The following additional requirement applies to this project:

**F.3.a. Palestinian Authority, West Bank, and Gaza Programming:** All awards made under this competition must be executed according to all relevant U.S. laws and policies regarding assistance to the Palestinian Authority, and to the West Bank and Gaza. Organizations must consult with relevant Public Affairs Offices before entering into any formal arrangements or agreements with Palestinian organizations or institutions.

Note: To assure that planning for the inclusion of the Palestinian Authority complies with requirements, please contact Katherine David-Fox at 202-632-6575 or David-FoxKO@state.gov for additional information.

**F.4. Reporting Requirements:** You must provide ECA with an electronic copy of the following required reports:

- 1.) Performance Progress Reports (PPRs) shall be required at a minimum annually and no more frequently than quarterly. Annual reports shall be due 120 calendar days after the cooperative agreement/grant year; quarterly or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. (Frequency of these reports will be determined by the Grants Officer and Program Officer.) The complete report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the Recipient as a Post Award Activity under the corresponding record for this Cooperative Agreement/Grant in the U.S. Department of State's [SAMS Domestic](#).
- 2.) The Federal Financial Report (FFR SF-425/SF-425a) must be submitted through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Payment Management System (PMS). The electronic version of the FFR can be accessed at: <http://www.dpm.psc.gov/>. Once a



financial report has been approved by the Department, the Recipient must upload the approved report to [SAMS Domestic](#), in the same manner specified for the programmatic reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the Recipient's eligibility for future Cooperative Agreements/Grants.

In the event you are having difficulty uploading reports and the ILMS help desk is not providing sufficient assistance, please email [ECA\\_SAMSDomestic@state.gov](mailto:ECA_SAMSDomestic@state.gov).

- 3.) A final program and financial report no more than 120 days after the expiration or termination of the award.
- 4.) Because the Competition will allow for the exercise of Non-Competitive Continuations (NCC), applicants must submit program and financial reports on time. The due dates for these reports will be included in the cooperative agreement. The program and financial reports must demonstrate substantial progress by addressing progress towards the original approved goals and objectives, related activities and events, and supporting fiscal data. The reports will be reviewed by both the assigned Grant Officer and Program Officer.

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. (Please refer to D.10. Program Monitoring and Evaluation.)

All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to the Bureau upon request.

**F.5. Program Data Requirements:** Award recipients will be required to maintain specific data on program participants and activities in an electronically accessible database format that can be shared with the Bureau as required. Award recipients must ensure that all Personally Identifiable Information (PII) from the participants is protected from access by unauthorized parties and that ECA is notified immediately if the recipient discovers any leaks of PII. At a minimum, the data must include the following:

- 1) Name, address, contact information, and biographic sketch of all persons who travel internationally on funds provided by the agreement or who benefit from the award funding but do not travel.
- 2) Itineraries of international and domestic travel, providing dates of travel and cities in which any exchange experiences take place. Final schedules for in-country and U.S. activities must be received by the ECA Program Officer at least three workdays prior to the official opening of the activity.

## **G. Agency Contacts**

For questions about this announcement, contact Katherine David-Fox by phone at (202) 632-6575 or by email at [David-FoxKO@state.gov](mailto:David-FoxKO@state.gov).



All correspondence with the Bureau concerning this NOFO should reference the title and funding opportunity number listed at the top of this solicitation.

Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, Bureau staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

**H. Other Information:****Notice:**

The terms and conditions published in this NOFO are binding and may not be modified by any Bureau representative. Explanatory information provided by the Bureau that contradicts published language will not be binding. Issuance of the NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government. The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Awards will be subject to periodic programmatic and financial reporting and evaluation requirements as outlined in the NOFO.

Lee Satterfield  
Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs  
U.S. Department of State

March 21, 2022